

STATE OF MAINE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 98-522

July 20, 1998

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Investigation into Electronic
Business Transaction Standards for
the Exchange of Information in a
Restructured Electricity Industry

CORRECTED
NOTICE OF INQUIRY

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT, Commissioner

I. SUMMARY

In this Notice we open an inquiry into the most effective methods for regularly transferring data among transmission and distribution utilities, competitive electricity providers, and bulk power system administrators after implementation of open access on March 1, 2000. Through this inquiry we will establish a statewide working group whose charge will be to investigate procedures, electronic protocols, and data formats for these data transfers. The working group shall provide consensus recommendations to the Commission for consideration and statewide adoption.

II. BACKGROUND

During its 1997 session, the Legislature fundamentally altered the electric utility industry in Maine by deregulating electric generation services and allowing for retail competition beginning on March 1, 2000.¹ At that time, Maine's electricity consumers will be able to choose a generation provider from a competitive market. As part of the restructuring process, the Act requires utilities to divest their generation assets and prohibits their participation (except through unregulated affiliates) in the generation services market.

To implement retail competition, a variety of entities must exchange a significant quantity of highly accurate information in very short time frames. Statewide consistency in transfer procedures will increase transfer speed and accuracy, minimize roadblocks to competitive electricity provider entry, minimize implementation costs, and reduce confusion on the part of providers and manufacturers. Accordingly, guidelines are required to govern the transfer of information among transmission and distribution utilities, competitive electricity providers,

¹An Act to Restructure the State's Electric Industry (the Act), P.L. 1997, ch.316 codified as 35-A M.R.S.A. §§ 3201-3217.

and bulk power system administrators.² Guidelines have been developed elsewhere, specifically in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and California, that can aid the development of guidelines in Maine.

III. DISCUSSION - MASSACHUSETTS GUIDELINES

In Massachusetts, an Electronic Business Transaction (EBT) Standards Working Group was formed to develop statewide guidelines. Membership included transmission and distribution utilities and competitive electricity providers. The Working Group subsequently submitted a report containing recommendations that were generally accepted by the Massachusetts Commission. The report included proposals on the following topics, as described in the Summary section of the group's report:

- i. trading partner business relationships - relationships among customers, competitive electricity providers, and transmission and distribution utilities;
- ii. transactions - electronic business transactions that correspond to the relationships described in (i) and business rules governing the transactions;
- iii. data formats - standard record formats and the method for packaging the transactions for electronic transmission;
- iv. electronic transmission - standardized methodology for sending and receiving transactions;
- v. computer operations - manual and automated operational issues;
- vi. training and testing - training program for competitive electricity providers and testing procedures for all entities; and
- vii. process continuation - process for continuing the working group and revising EBT processes.

Consistency in the New England region will reinforce the benefits provided by statewide consistency. Our current view, therefore, is that Maine should use the Massachusetts EBT Standards as a template and modify those Standards only as

² Information transfer needs of New England's Independent System Operator (ISO-NE) are relatively well understood. Operation of open access in Northern Maine is currently under development, but it is likely that some form of information transfer with a bulk power system administrator in the Maritime control area will be necessary.

necessary for operation in Maine. We encourage interested persons to obtain the Massachusetts EBT Standards from the Eastern Utilities Associates web page, www.eua.com. We will provide a copy upon request.

The use of a statewide working group comprising individuals with technical and implementation knowledge of data processing and transfer needs is an efficient, workable approach in Maine, as it was in Massachusetts. Two other states with approved EBT Standards, Pennsylvania and California, used similar working groups to develop standards. For these reasons, we initiate a statewide working group in Maine to develop EBT standards.

IV. FORMATION OF EBT WORKING GROUP IN MAINE

Through this Notice we create a statewide working group to develop recommendations for procedures, electronic protocols, and data formats to be used when transferring data among entities in Maine after implementation of open access on March 1, 2000. The working group shall comprise any interested entity affected by the restructuring of Maine's electricity industry. The working group shall be chaired by a member(s) chosen by the group. Decisions shall be made by consensus among group members. The working group shall keep the Commission informed of emerging issues and decisions.

The working group shall develop a report that describes its recommendations on the 7 issues listed in Section III above and on any additional issues determined by the working group to be necessary for effective electronic business transaction. The working group shall present its report to the Commission on or before February 28, 1999. The Commission will consider the recommendations, will allow input by interested parties, and will approve final guidelines no later than June 30, 1999. We initially believe that all transmission and distribution utilities and competitive electricity providers in the State will be required to adopt the approved guidelines before operating in the open access environment on March 1, 2000.

To begin this process, we have scheduled the first meeting of the EBT Standards Working Group on August 11, 1998, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. in the Maine Public Utilities Commission Temporary Conference Room 3.

V. INQUIRY PROCESS

Interested persons may participate in this inquiry by filing a letter stating their interest no later than July 31, 1998. The filing letter should state whether the interested person wishes to be a member of the EBT Working Group, or whether the

interested person wishes to be placed on a list for purposes of receiving further correspondence. The letter should be addressed to Dennis L. Keschl, Administrative Director and include the docket number, Docket No. 98-522. All subsequent filings must be served to all interested parties on the service list.

Accordingly, we

O R D E R

1. That an Inquiry shall be opened as described in the body of this Notice;
2. That this Notice shall be sent to all electric utilities in the State of Maine;
3. That this Notice shall be sent to the service list of electric restructuring, Docket No. 95-462;
4. That this Notice shall be sent to parties who have shown an interest in comparable cases in Massachusetts;
5. That this Notice shall be sent to the service lists of Docket No. 97-861, Docket No. 97-739, and Docket No. 97-590; and
6. That this Notice of Inquiry will also be posted on the Commission's website, <http://www.state.me.us/mpuc>.

Dated at Augusta, Maine this 14th day of July, 1998.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Dennis L. Keschl
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch
 Nugent